

Italians in New York During the First Half of the Nineteenth Century

By

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ITALIANS IN NEW YORK DURING THE FIRST HALF OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

HOWARD R. MARRARO

A FEW years ago the author published in this magazine¹ the preliminary results of a study on Italo-Americans in eighteenth century New York. That study showed that though the number of Italians in the state was very small, still they represented a creditable group of citizens who played their part in the life of the community in which they lived, engaged as they were in the practise of various trades and professions: medicine, dentistry, music, stagecraft, painting, printing, confectionery, restaurant, and the like. Further research on the subject has uncovered a wealth of information on the type and character of the Italians who came to the United States during the first half of the nineteenth century, and on the contribution they made to the cultural and material progress of our country. So very little is known about these early Italian settlers in New York that the information here presented, gleaned largely from the newspapers of the period and from hitherto unpublished sources, while not exhaustive, still is sufficient to enable us to draw a fairly accurate picture of the Italian scene in New York during the period.

It is important to bear in mind, at the outset, that the great sources of emigration to America during this period were British and German. In those years the Italians did not migrate in the true sense of the word; they would leave their homes in small numbers for the countries that bordered the Mediterranean, but they did not, unless under

¹ Howard R. Marraro, "Italo-Americans in Eighteenth Century New York," *New York History*, XVI (July, 1940), 316-323.

the ban of exile, cross the Atlantic.² For example, the annual report of the Commissioner of Emigration for the year 1849 shows that of the 220,603 aliens who arrived in the port of New York during that year, only 602 were from Italy, 172 from Sardinia, and 21 from Sicily—a total of 795 emigrants from the various Italian states.³

A statistical summary published in the *Census Population of the United States in 1860*, showed that a total of 4,561 Italians arrived in the United States from Italy, Sicily, and Sardinia during the thirty years, 1820-1850, as follows:

Years	Italy	Sicily	Sardinia	Total
1820-30	389	17	32	438
1831-40	2,211	35	7	2,253
1841-50	1,590	79	201	1,870
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
1820-1850	4,190	131	240	4,561

No information is available as to how many of these Italians eventually left the United States either to return to Italy or to go to other countries. The fact is that the census of 1850 showed a total of 3,645 Italians in the United States and territories, representing 0.17 per cent of the total foreign population of the country.⁴ These 3,645 Italians were scattered in all the states and territories except New Hampshire and Delaware. The state of New York with 833 Italians had the second largest Italian population, the first being Louisiana with 915.⁵

In order to have as clear a picture as is possible of the Italian community in New York City during the middle

² L. Stebbins, *Eighty Years' Progress of the United States: a Family Record of American Industry, Energy and Enterprise* (Hartford, Conn., 1862), 2 vols; II, 232.

³ Doggett's *New York City Directory, 1850-51* (New York, 1851). Appendix, 51.

⁴ United States: Census. *Census population of the United States in 1860*: (Washington, 1864), xxviii. The total does not include 34 Sardinians, listed separately, of whom 15 were in Ohio, 9 in Louisiana, and the others scattered in other states.

⁵ United States: *The Seventh Census of the United States: 1850. Embracing a statistical view of each of the states and territories, arranged by counties towns, etc.* (Washington, 1853), xxxvi.

of the last century, the author made a careful study of Doggett's *New York City Directory* for 1850-51, when for the first time the canvass for the names inserted in this work was extended to 42nd Street. Of the total 80,290 names⁶ in the *Directory*, only 226 were identified with reasonable certainty as Italians. It is difficult, of course, even for one who is well-acquainted with Italian-sounding names, to identify all with positive certainty. The fact however, that in those days Italians had not yet begun to Anglicize their names made the task of identification somewhat easier than it would be now. Though only 226 Italian names were identified, this number does not represent the total Italian population in New York City in 1850, because only the names of the heads of the household were given, with no indication as to the number of persons composing a family. Bearing in mind that there were 833 Italians in New York State, and the fact that the city census covered only about a tenth of the total population, it is probable that the total Italian colony in New York City in 1850 numbered approximately 700.

The 226 Italians listed in the *Directory* were engaged in a wide variety of trades and professions. An actual count showed the following result: tailors, dressmakers, clothiers, furriers, milliners (21); merchants, importers, agents, brokers (20); musicians and theatrical artists (15); grocers, bakers, butchers and confectioners (15); barbers, hairdressers (11); cigar dealers (10); shoe and bootmakers (9); masons, plumbers, painters, whitewashers (8); laborers, porters (8); riggers, carmen, mechanics, harnessmakers (8); hardware and toy dealers (6); pilots, sailmakers, seamen (6); hotel and boarding house keepers (5); book dealers, printers, publishers (5); carpenters and cabinet makers (5); statuary, crockery and marble workers (5); sculptors and artists (5); glaziers and frame makers (4); accountants and clerks (4); restaurateurs

⁶ This represents only 11.5 per cent of the total New York City population, since the 1850 United States census showed that population to be 696,115.

(3); liquor dealers (3); upholsterers and brush makers (3); physicians (3); lawyers (3); jewelers (3); figure makers, boxmakers (3); consuls (2); billiard and bar owners (2); peddlers (2); and one each as druggist, professor of Italian, inspector, minister, policeman. No trade or profession was given for 24 names.

To care for the spiritual needs of the Italian community, there were two Italian Catholic priests, the Very Reverend F. Varela, attached to the Church of Transfiguration, 45 Chambers Street, and the Reverend Charles C. Pise, connected with St. Peter's Church located at Barclay Street, corner of Church.⁷ For years the treasurer of the Roman Catholic Orphan Asylum on Prince Street was John B. LaSala.⁸

In 1850 among the Italian diplomatic and consular representatives who made their homes in New York City were the following:⁹

Naples—Rocco Martuscelli, chargé d'affaires

Sebastiano Dacorsi, acting

Roman States—Louis B. Binsse

Sardinia—Louis Mossi, chargé d'affaires

Sebastiano Dacorsi, acting

Sicily—Joseph Antinelli

Tuscany—William H. Aspinwall, vice-consul.

It is rather interesting to note that Naples and Sardinia, although following an entirely different political course at that time, still had the same person, Sebastiano Dacorsi, acting for their respective *chargés d'affaires*.

As we have already noticed, many of the Italians in this country during the first half of the nineteenth century were driven here by the political disturbances that accompanied the efforts of Italian patriots to achieve national independence and liberty for their native land. Many of these were patriots who, after long confinement in the

⁷ Doggett, *op. cit.*, 1849-50, p. 24.

⁸ New York *Evening Post*, May 31, 1834.

⁹ Doggett, *op. cit.*, 28.

dungeons of Austria, Naples, or the States of the Church for the offence of designing or desiring to liberate their country from oppression, had been released through the tender mercies of the despots and permitted to seek an asylum in this country. As men of culture and education, these political refugees readily won places of honor and distinction for themselves in the American business and professional worlds. Sober, industrious and law-abiding, they enjoyed the respect and good-will of their neighbors. The exalted lives and sterling qualities of character of men of the calibre of DaPonte, Foresti, Bachi, Monti, Confalonieri, Borsieri, Maroncelli, Mariotti, Avezzana and Garibaldi—to mention only a few of the leaders—endeared them to all liberty-loving Americans.¹⁰

The majority of the exiles usually came to America individually or in small groups. A group of eight exiles, consisting of Gaetano de Castillia, Piero Borsieri, Felice Argenti, Luigi Tinelli, Felice Foresti, Giovanni Albinola, Alepandio Luigi Bargnani, and Cesare Bensoni, arrived in New York in mid-October 1836, on the Austrian government vessell, *L'ussero*. Their actual liberation did not take place until they had landed in this city, for though they had been given the choice to come here, yet an Austrian commissioner accompanied them on their voyage to see that they did not turn back. In an announcement of their arrival, the New York *Evening Post*¹¹ declared that these exiles for the cause of human rights and national independence, respectable for their individual characters and recommended to the sympathies of Americans by the cause for which they suffered, were entitled to the warmest welcome of Americans. The *Evening Post* trusted that they would be enabled to find their residence in America as comfortable and happy as it would, at least, be free from the restraints of tyranny.

¹⁰ H. R. Marraro, *American Opinion on the Unification of Italy, 1846-61* (New York, 1932), 165.

¹¹ October 19, 1836.

After long years behind stone walls and iron bars, which Foresti, leader of the group, later described so graphically in his *Memoirs*,¹² so intense was the satisfaction with which they first trod American soil that, for many years, the Battery, where they landed, was hallowed to their memories as consecrated ground. A few days after their arrival, a banquet was tendered them by their compatriots at Delmonico's. The newspapers devoted considerable space to them, recommending them to the sympathy and love of the American people. A week after his arrival, in a letter to Madame Antonietta Fabri, who had befriended him while at Gradisca, Foresti wrote: "I am in good health, and I have reason to flatter myself that in this hospitable land I will not be as unhappy as I feared that I would be."¹³ In fact, Foresti never forgot the kindness shown to him by his American friends during his long stay in America, and often recalled with gratitude the names of Sedgwick W. Johnson, Sidney Brooks, Judge William T. McCoun, William Cullen Bryant, and others. In an autobiographical article which years later he published in the *New York Times*¹⁴ he wrote: "With my own labor I have honorably provided for myself. But during these seventeen years of exile, how much do I not owe to the kindness and courtesy of the people of New York? Many of its most distinguished families have scattered flowers on the disastrous path of my exile . . . the Emperor of Austria was mistaken in believing my exile in America would be a punishment. The people changed into good that which he designed for evil."

Very soon after his arrival at New York Foresti began to show much interest in the political conditions of Italy. Indeed he came out of Spielberg not reconciled with his persecutors as did Pellico; he was not indifferent to the struggles of Italians for political independence as was

¹² E. Felice Foresti, "The Fate of the Carbonari: Memoirs of Felice Foresti," *Columbia University Quarterly*, XXIV (Dec. 1932), 441-475.

¹³ Original MS in Archivio del Risorgimento, Milan.

¹⁴ July 7, 1854.

Confalonieri. In letters which he wrote to his cousin, Casimiro, Foresti often complained of the manner in which he had been treated by his relatives during his imprisonment and exile. They had neglected and abandoned him, he wrote, because of their aversion and contempt for his political philosophy. "But," he added, "I am proud of having been a Carbonaro and of having suffered as I did for my country." And when, in 1839, the Austrian Ambassador at Washington sent him a copy of the decree of the Austrian Emperor permitting him to return to Ferrara provided he could also receive the permission of the Holy Pontiff, Foresti wrote to his cousin that he intended to avail himself of this opportunity merely because he wished to visit his relations, but he had no desire to remain there, since, he explained, "Italy is no country for me now." In a letter to Count Francesco Bernardi, dated March 31, 1842, Foresti inveighed against his countrymen who "jackass-like" continued to applaud, compliment and pay homage to their masters. He warned the Count not to associate himself with the weak and cowardly of whom there were many in Italy. Two years later in another letter to Count Bernardi, dated March 22, 1844, discussing the presidential campaign in the United States, Foresti stated that he was casting his vote for Van Buren because he was convinced of the justice and usefulness of his political and administrative platform. It was the right of suffrage, he stressed, that raised the moral and civic virtues of man. He frankly told the Count that the nobles of Italy could well envy the poor street cleaner of New York who, by his vote, could help to elect candidates to public office.¹⁵

His keen interest in the political affairs of his native country soon led Foresti to join the *Giovine Italia*, the liberal and patriotic organization which Mazzini had established after the suppression of the Carbonari Society.

¹⁵ Original MSS in Museo del Risorgimento, Bologna.

He entered into extensive correspondence with Mazzini, offering his help and advice. On June 6, 1841, he organized and became the president of the branch of the society known as the *Congrega Centrale* of New York, whose scope, as determined at the time of the organization, included in addition to the twenty-five states of the Union, Cuba, Havana, West Indies, the Republic of Granada, Equador, and Venezuela. Among its activities the *Congrega* held lectures and through the press also helped to spread everywhere an opinion favorable to the cause of Mazzini. It came into a secret agreement with the Christian Alliance and other Protestant organizations to help in overthrowing the temporal power of the Pope and in encouraging the recognition of the unity, independence and the liberty of Italy. To provide financial assistance to Mazzini, the *Congrega* subscribed to five hundred copies of the *Apostolato*, a republican newspaper which he edited. The energy with which Foresti conducted these activities of the *Congrega* received the praise of Mazzini, who often referred to the "model work" of the New York branch of the society, and described Foresti as almost the only one of the Spielberg prisoners whose will-power and energy had not weakened.

In the summer of 1843, Foresti went to Europe to meet with the leaders of the *Giovine Italia*, to discuss with them the plans of the society. Mazzini, who knew of Foresti's plans in advance, urged Giuseppe Lamberti, then in Paris, to treat Foresti well. "Have him meet our friends," wrote Mazzini to Lamberti, "and if you can get up a meeting in his honor all the better. When he passes through London I wish to make some propositions to him with regard to our work in America which are important, and for that reason I must find him enthusiastic." After a stay of about two weeks in Paris, Foresti went to London, where he saw Mazzini. He remained there less than a month, for he returned to America to resume his activities as Presi-

dent of the National Italian Association, into which the *Giovine Italia* had been converted in 1847.¹⁶

During the political revolutions of 1848, Foresti participated in many popular manifestations in America in behalf of liberty and freedom. His speeches on these occasions were often reproduced in full in the newspapers. At the meeting held in New York City in November, 1847, to congratulate Pius IX on his liberal reforms, Foresti, addressing the meeting in Italian, responded in the most grateful terms to the expressions of sympathy for his native land. Then, turning to his countrymen who were present, he urged them to prove themselves worthy of so great an interest in their country on the part of the community in which they lived. At a very large demonstration held in front of City Hall in New York on the afternoon of April 3, 1848, in response to the French Revolution, Professor Foresti said that "the French had conquered a great principle—a principle which Providence had planted deep in the human soul—the all-powerful principle of liberty! Italy, too, had felt this principle . . . Italy waited for the moment of triumph, and to the world's astonishment, the Head of the great Catholic Church, was the first to cry 'awake'."

When the Sicilian brig *Carolina*, bearing at the mast head for the first time since the Roman Empire, the flag of a united Italy, arrived at New York in May, 1848, Professor Foresti, in presenting a banner to Captain G. Corrao of the brig, in behalf of all Italians, said that this offering was made in token of their nationality and fraternity—a testimony that the same spirit of patriotism and heroic devotion which had purchased the independence of Italy was also felt in America with equal strength and fervor. "Say to them, too," added Professor Foresti, sending word to the Sicilians, "that we would welcome them here with

¹⁶ G. Mazzini, *Scritti editi ed inediti (Epistolario)* (Imola, 1905); M. Menghini, *Lettere di G. Garibaldi, Q. Filopanti, e A. Lemmi a Felice Foresti e Lettere di Felice Foresti a G. Lamberti e a G. Mazzini* (Imola, 1909).

the hospitality and fraternity of feeling with which we have hailed this vessel bearing the colors of regenerated Italy.”¹⁷

Foresti's enthusiasm for the cause of Italy was not confined to mere words. Realizing the importance of the political disturbances that swept through the Italian peninsula in 1848, he sailed for Europe. A few days before his departure he issued an address to the Italians of America stressing the seriousness of the revolts, and urging them not to remain inactive spectators. He declared that it was their duty to defend the cause of Italy in the war which Sardinia was then waging against Austria. On the day of his departure, June 10, 1848, on the *United States*, many friends and admirers went aboard to bid Foresti good-bye. After assuring him that the hearty good wishes of a very large circle of American friends accompanied him to his native country, the *New York Evening Express* declared that Italy would soon enjoy the blessings of peace under a free and constitutional government and concluded that nothing would do that country more “honor,” or “afford greater pleasure and satisfaction” than to have Foresti return to America as the representative of the free government of Italy.¹⁸

On his arrival at Paris Foresti took counsel with the revolutionary leaders there, and together with Anselmo Guerrieri, Valenti Gonzaga, Giuseppe Verdi, the composer, and others, he signed an address reproaching the French Government for its refusal to help Sardinia in her war against Austria. He then passed through Italy, going as far south as the frontiers of the Papal States, when the fatal reaction, supported by French bayonets, at Rome sent him back once more to the land of his adoption, where he continued to give his support to the Italian republicans.

On August 26, 1849, at a large meeting held in New

¹⁷ Marraro, *American Opinion*, 30-31.

¹⁸ *New York Evening Express*, June 9, 1848; *New York Evening Post*, June 9, 1848; *New York Tribune*, June 13, 1848; *La Concordia*, Turin, July 25, 1848.

York City, Foresti attacked Napoleon III in no uncertain terms for having sent a French army to suppress the Roman Republic. He said that the Romans would have fought better had they been led against the barbarians of Austria, Spain or Naples; but they could not have stained their hands with the blood of brethren. Discussing the same subject at a banquet held in New York City in May, 1850, Professor Foresti said in part that he did not wish to speak about the French Republic, which went to Italy to crush the Roman Republic. "No," he said, "I am not the slave of national prejudices. I am here because I am a republican; and I cherish the republicans of all countries . . . I believe the French republic has for her mission to regenerate the world." In conclusion he said that the people loved order, that they had a right to power, that God had not given to kings, but to the people their intelligence, the right of government, and that there should be neither privileged casts nor kings, but only the people. "My text is," he said, "To the people, to the democracy."

Foresti was chiefly responsible for the enthusiastic reception accorded to both General Giuseppe Avezzana, the late Secretary of War of the Roman Republic, and General Giuseppe Garibaldi, leader of the revolutionists, when they came to America after the tragic days of 1849, which culminated in the fall of the Republic. Three months before the arrival of General Avezzana the *New York Daily Tribune*¹⁹ published a brief sketch of his life wherein it recalled that he had first come to New York in 1834 but had returned to Italy in 1848, taking part in the insurrection in Genoa in 1849. After this debacle he had sought refuge on an American ship of war, the *Princeton*, Captain Engle, which took him to Leghorn, where by means of another American ship, the *Alleghany*, Captain Hunter, he arrived at Civita Vecchia; from there he went to Rome. After the fall of the Roman Republic, Avezzana

¹⁹ May 11, 1849.

was protected by the American consul, Mr. Nicholas Browne, and then received an American passport from Mr. Lewis Cass, Jr., the American *Chargé d'affaires*. Under the name of Everett he succeeded in escaping from Civita Vecchia and returned to the United States. Shortly after his arrival at New York, in August, 1849, the Italians of the city at a large meeting held in the Apollo Rooms resolved to present a magnificent sword to this great leader, who had behaved "so gallantly and conspicuously" in the cause of Roman and Italian liberty.²⁰ The sword was inscribed with the words; "The Italians of New York to General Joseph Avezzana as proof of esteem for his services to the cause of liberty in 1849." On one side of the scabbard was a representation of Genoa, on the other a representation of Rome. Enthusiasm was unbounded at the ceremony of the presentation of the sword, which took place in the Chapel of New York University.²¹ The New York *Herald* eulogized the general for his brave defence of the "glorious old walls of Rome against the assassin of liberty, Oudinot, who was deputed by Napoleon [whom the newspaper described as head executioner at Paris] to stifle the aspirations of the infant republic."²² Following this testimonial, the general was received in the City Hall by the Mayor and the Common Council.²³

The arrival of Giuseppe Garibaldi in New York was attended with a great deal of excitement, the newspapers publishing appreciations of the man to whom they referred as "the distinguished champion of liberty." "Few men," wrote the New York *Herald*, "have achieved so much for the cause of freedom, and no one has accomplished so many heroic acts for the independence of a fatherland, as General Garibaldi has for Italy."²⁴ His friends and admirers wished to give him a public welcome,

²⁰ New York *Herald*, Aug. 19, 1849.

²¹ New York *Evening Post*, Sept. 11, 1849.

²² New York *Herald*, Sept. 10, 1849.

²³ New York *Herald*, Sept. 11, 1849.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, July 25, 1850.

but this plan met with such strong opposition from the Irish Catholic faction in New York that it was finally abandoned. The general, however, received many unofficial manifestations of sympathy and the press paid full tribute to his brilliant achievements.²⁵

In the following hitherto unpublished document from L. Mossi, the Sardinian Minister at Washington to Massimo D'Azeglio, the Minister of Foreign Affairs at Turin, we have an official, though partial, explanation of the difficulties in the way of tendering a public reception to Garibaldi. The original letter in French, No. 38, dated "Des Eaux de Sharon," New York State, August 10, 1850, after discussing the composition of the New presidential cabinet in Washington with Daniel Webster as Secretary of State, the slave question, and Cuba, continues as follows:²⁶

The Italians of New York had appointed a committee composed of the most violent and the biggest demagogic hotheads of the community to preside over the public reception that they wished to tender to the famous Garibaldi who, on his arrival in New York at the beginning of the month, gave his approval for this demonstration. The Germans and French were to take part in the reception, and the united committees of Republicans, Democrats, and Socialists of the two countries had already given notice through the newspapers that to be allowed to take part in the celebration it was necessary to wear red, the only color that had been unanimously voted upon, they said, by the meeting. The red color was indispensable for admission to the ranks of the demonstration. While the Italian committee was making its preparation for this reception, the numerous German workers and tailors of the city resorted to excesses, irritated as they were by the leadership assumed by the Socialists. Thereupon the police took energetic measures to put an end to acts of violence which nothing could justify. Therefore Garibaldi considered the time inappropriate to

²⁵ Marraro, *American Opinion*, 185.

²⁶ MS State Archives, Turin, Italy.

addressed a letter to the Italian committee in which he definitely declined the public reception that had been offered to him. I like better, he said in this letter, to become peacefully and humbly, a citizen of this great republic of freemen, to sail under its flag, pursue a career that will permit me to earn a livelihood, and await a favorable opportunity to deliver my country from its foreign and domestic oppressors. Garibaldi is accompanied by another adventurer, the self-styled Colonel Forbes, who is English, I believe. Both have presented in New York letters of recommendation from Mazzini. I am informed that recently the clubs of the Giovane Italia established in New York have been very active. The European correspondents of the American press stress the great activity of this society in Italy, adding that especially in Genoa has it made considerable progress. . . .

Garibaldi remained in New York for about a year, residing for the most part in the home of his friend Antonio Meucci in Staten Island, where both worked in the manufacture of candles. While in New York, Garibaldi took an active interest in the Italian community of the city, which, as far back as 1825, had become large enough to encourage its leaders to formulate plans for the organization of a mutual aid society. This association became known as *Società di Unione e Benevolenza Italiana*. Its specific purpose was to relieve the unfortunate, poor and sick Italians in the city, and "to keep alive a true feeling of nationality." With the increase in the Italian population in the city, the membership of the society and its functions expanded. All the leading Italians of the period at one time or another became identified with its work, Garibaldi and Avezzana being among its honorary presidents.²⁷ The officers for the year 1849-50 were: E. Felix Foresti, President; D. Altrocchi, Vice President; G. Cristadoro, Treasurer; Charles Ferrero, Secretary; G. Tagliabue, F. Garufi, G. B. Costa, G. Guidicini and F. Monteverde, Committee.²⁸

²⁷ New York *Daily Tribune*, Oct. 13, 1851; New York *Herald*, May 26, 1863.

²⁸ Doggett, *op. cit.*, 1849-50, (New York, 1850), Appendix, 13.

No information is available as to the amount of relief the society offered to its members during this period. At the annual meeting of the society held on November 13, 1854, however, the treasurer reported that during the preceding twelve months, the society had received contributions amounting to five hundred dollars and had assisted about one hundred needful Italians by affording to them monetary relief, averaging from \$3 to \$15. The balance in the treasury then was about \$800.00.²⁹

Two other Italians active in the work of the society and in the Italian community of New York, deserve special mention—namely Louis Chitti and Michele Pastacaldi. Chitti was especially well known in Virginia for having contributed in that state to the cultivation of wool and enjoyed in Europe a high reputation as a profound thinker and a distinguished writer on political economy. Gioberti and Cobden spoke of Chitti as a man of eminent genius and a most able advocate of free trade. A native of Naples, from whence he had been exiled in 1821, Mr. Chitti had held distinguished offices in several European countries, serving as Secretary of Finance in his native Kingdom, and Inspector of the Bank of Gand in Belgium. In America Mr. Chitti was on friendly terms with Calhoun, Webster, Clay, and Senator Sumner of Massachusetts, and with many other leading American statesmen. He died in New York in 1853 at the age of seventy and was buried in the New York Bay Cemetery in the ground belonging to the Italian Benevolent Society.³⁰

Michele Pastacaldi came to America in 1842 as a visitor, and, as frequently happens with Italians, becoming an admirer of its people and institutions, resolved to make it his home. Subsequently he was engaged in business as a merchant in trade with Italy and continued in it uninterruptedly to the day of his death in 1862. He was not only successful in business but also one of the most widely

²⁹ *New York Herald*, Nov. 17, 1854.

³⁰ *New York Evening Post*, Sept. 2, 1853.

popular and personally beloved of all the Italians in New York. While in New York Garibaldi was often a guest and intimate of Mr. Pastacaldi whose house, hospitality and purse were ever open at his service. At a time when the cause of "free Italy" attracted so much attention in New York City, Mr. Pastacaldi gave unsparingly of his time, influence, and money to the cause. To a commanding presence and courtly address he added all the noble and generous impulses of his friend Garibaldi, coupled at the same time with a simplicity and modesty of deportment that made him beloved by all who knew him. In an obituary article, the New York *Herald*³¹ noted that "although Italian by birth and ardently attached to the country of his birth, by long residence here [in America] and association with men of his position and influence, he had become as thoroughly progressive and American in spirit as one 'native and to the manor born.'"

The desire for information on the political disturbances in the Italian peninsula in 1849 created a need for an Italian language newspaper which would keep Italians in New York in close touch with important political and military events in their native land.³² In June, 1849, G. F. Secchi di Casali, a native of Piacenza, Italy, who had come to New York in 1843, decided to meet this need by establishing the first Italian language newspaper in New York under the title of *l'Europeo Americano*. Because so very little is known of this newspaper, it seems advisable to quote from a letter, marked "very confidential," dated Washington, February 10, 1850, by Rocco Martuscelli,

³¹ Nov. 23, 1862.

³² Little or nothing is known concerning the Italian newspapers in New York during this period. Simon N. D. North in his *History and Present Condition of the Newspaper and Periodical press of the United States* with a catalogue of the publications of the census year (Washington, 1881) merely states (p. 130) that there was an Italian newspaper started in New York City in 1854, and that in 1880 the number had increased to four, three of which were published in California and the fourth in New York.

addressed to the Hon. Giustino Fortunato, Neapolitan Minister of Foreign Affairs:³³

Last year a certain Secchi di Casali began the publication of a newspaper in Italian and English to maintain alive, as he said, among the Italian residents in the United States, their love of their mother country and to inform them in their own language of the events in Europe in general, and of those of Italy in particular. However, this newspaper not only did not adhere to its original program, but it turned out to be a pack of lies, a heap of insults, a series of personal invectives, a collection of thoughts and principles harmful to society; in short, it became a workshop for the manufacture of the most perverted and wicked ideas that may suggest themselves to a hot-headed individual and to an ignorant mind encumbered with utopias and dreams. For these reasons, instead of encountering the sympathy of those who really took pride in their Italian birth, the newspaper met with their despise and reproach. After the publication of a few numbers it was forced to discontinue its publication, and to retire amid the hate and abhorrence of everyone. It should have considered itself fortunate if time had erased from the minds of its compatriots the bad impression it had produced. Its brief duration had spared me the grief of having to notify you of its existence, especially since I felt certain, as did many others, that its editor having profited by this lesson would turn his mediocre talent to more worthy enterprises.

The report of Louis Mossi, Sardinian *chargé d'affaires* in Washington, to his minister of foreign affairs in Turin, was also full of accusations against the paper and its editor. In his despatch No. 31, dated Washington, March 25, 1850, Mr. Mossi stated that "all that which men respect and esteem, became the object of his [Secchi di Casali's] abominable attacks."³⁴

In his report Martuscelli had regretted the fact that meanwhile Mr. di Casali had utilized his time to collect

³³ MS State Archives, Naples.

³⁴ MS State Archives, Turin.

money and secure the necessary funds for the publication of another "contemptible" newspaper. The new paper, called *L'Eco d'Italia*, according to Martuscelli, apparently planned to follow the path of the first paper, since its policies were essentially the same. But, in order to give the Neapolitan Foreign Minister [Fortunato] an opportunity to judge for himself, Martuscelli enclosed for him several copies of the first numbers. The *chargé d'affaires* was anxious to show Fortunato how unpleasant and harmful the newspaper might prove to be among the Italian population of the United States. On inquiry Martuscelli was informed that inability to earn a livelihood in any other way and dire necessity had suggested to Mr. di Casali the idea of establishing this paper. In view of this fact Martuscelli thought that it should not prove too difficult to advise the editor to choose some other career, or at least to adopt radical changes in the policy of the paper. Martuscelli asked Fortunato for suggestions as to the best means to counteract the evil influence of the paper, and in conclusion expressed the hope that all the Italian states would take an equal interest in the matter so as to facilitate the way to achieve this purpose.³⁵

Mossi did not seem quite so concerned over the new publication. In his letter of March 25, 1850, he merely stated to his foreign minister that the *Eco d'Italia*, though less immoral, was not less violent, nor less replete with invectives than the *Europeo Americano* had been.³⁶

Despite the objections raised by Martuscelli and Mossi, the *Eco d'Italia*, then published weekly in New York City, was well received by many Italians and Americans. On the occasion of *L'Eco's* entering its second half-year, *The Morning Courier and New York Enquirer*³⁷ stated that the Italian paper was "ably conducted," and, on account of its enlightened republicanism, was "peculiarly entitled to con-

³⁵ MS State Archives, Naples.

³⁶ MS State Archives, Turin.

³⁷ Aug. 15, 1850.

fidence and patronage." *The Morning Courier* added that judging by the general tenor of his articles, Mr. di Casali, who had resided only six years in this country, had nevertheless "imbibed the true republican spirit." Calling attention to *L'Eco d'Italia's* enlarged form and to its "most elegant and attractive typography," the New York *Daily Tribune* described it as "one of the handsomest sheets published in the city," and noted with pleasure this evidence of its success and prosperity.³⁸

L'Eco d'Italia was not only opposed by the diplomatic representatives of Italy, but it also met with the open opposition of the followers of Mazzini in this country. In a letter to Mazzini dated New York, July 15, 1851, E. H. Forbes expressed the hope that soon *L'Eco d'Italia* would cease publication, since another Italian, who had failed in an attempt to purchase that paper, was planning to found another sheet which he expected to call *Il Patriota Italiano*. For the new publication Foresti expected to be a contributor. "But", added Forbes, "in that case it will be necessary for you to send an occasional article from London, so as to enhance the credit of the paper. You must not neglect to do this, since it is important to have a good organ here."³⁹

Disagreement over the policies of the *Eco d'Italia* brought to birth another Italian newspaper. In 1850 Professor E. Felix Foresti, dissatisfied with the policy and management of *L'Eco*, started in New York *L'Esule Italiano*, a paper whose chief aim was to further the cause of Mazzini's republicanism in America. This, however, because of lack of funds and the inexperience of its editor, Torricelli, a former Capuchin, had a short existence. According to Fumagalli, on August 7, 1851, *L'Esule Italiano* assumed the title of *Proscritto*.⁴⁰ *Il Proscritto*, under the joint editorship of A. Maggi and F. Manetta, the New

³⁸ Feb. 12, 1851.

³⁹ Giuseppe Fumagalli, *La stampa periodica italiana all'estero* (Milan 1909), 35.

⁴⁰ Fumagalli, *op. cit.*, 35.

York *Herald*⁴¹ believed gave promise of being a very useful journal to Italians, having been received with great favor. In the Manuscript Division of the New York Public Library, the author found the following announcement addressed "To American Readers" on paper of the *Proscritto*:

TO AMERICAN READERS ⁴²

The New York Italian newspaper (PROSCRITTO) has been established by Italian exiles in America, who have fought and bled, as well as written for freedom in their own land. Their object is to encourage and extend the spirit of liberty among their countrymen, and to make other people acquainted with the true nature and objects of the Italian cause.

The chief object of attack will be the Papal power, which has for so many ages oppressed mankind and ruined Italy; and will be done by the publication of facts, showing its baneful influence. In such an object Americans have a deep interest; but they need information such as Italians can best give. Much will be found in these pages useful to them, exposing the operations, designs and measures pursued by the common enemies of liberty on both sides of the Atlantic.

The miscellaneous columns of this paper will also contain matter interesting to Americans.

Many persons in the United States are acquainted with the Italian language, and others desirous of learning it. A few of the most interesting paragraphs in each paper will be given with the English translation, in parallel columns. These will serve as convenient lessons in families, and even in schools, for familiar exercises in the language.

American editors will find in these columns authentic and valuable information for republication in their journals, ready prepared.—A. Maggi—F. Manetta.

L'Eco d'Italia, however, continued to be regarded as the "principal" Italian paper. It was Whig in its politics, and,

⁴¹ Aug. 31, 1851.

⁴² MS New York Public Library, Manuscript Division.

in the opinion of the New York *Herald*,⁴³ "conducted with judgment." The editor, Mr. di Casali, had rendered himself extremely useful to the American government on various topics connected with America's foreign trade and emigration. The *Herald* pointed out that *L'Eco* was "particularly suited to those who were studying the Italian language."

In another letter to the Piedmontese minister of foreign affairs, dated Washington, April 22, 1851, L. Mossi, the *chargé d'affaires*, stated that di Casali, the editor of *L'Eco d'Italia*, had become more moderate in his political views and "seemed to be zealous in his efforts to belie the calumnies that Avezzana, Garibaldi, Filopanti, Minelli and other hot-heads are constantly trying to spread in this country concerning the policy of his Majesty's government." In December, 1850, according to Mossi, Mr. di Casali asked him for assistance, which he granted. However, Mossi warned the Foreign Minister that *L'Eco's* editor was then planning to sail for Turin and that most probably he would call on the foreign minister to request a subsidy for his paper. Although Mossi felt that the continued appearance of the journal would serve a useful purpose, still he

⁴³ Aug. 31, 1851. In a manuscript letter dated New York, February 1, 1851, preserved among the Fillmore papers at the Buffalo Historical Society, Mr. di Casali applied to President Fillmore for "an immediate appointment in the Custom House." In a brief account of his life, Mr. di Casali stated that he had suffered exile for the cause of Italian independence for fourteen years, that he had been connected with the American press for six years, that he had edited the *Eco d'Italia*, that he had "always zealously advocated the Whig and Union principles," that his paper—the only one published in the Union—was "circulated and read by some 30,000 or 40,000 naturalized Italians (author's note: the total Italian population in the United States in 1850 was 3,645!!!), and that to sustain it he had made a great many sacrifices which he was sure the President would appreciate. Mr. di Casali also stated in his letter that he had never before sought any office, but being at that time "in very distressed circumstances owing to the above causes," and wishing to maintain the then present position of his paper whose influence, he claimed, governed a large majority of the Italians in this country, he was induced to lay aside "the delicacy of feeling," and hoped that the President would take his case into his most favorable considerations. Mr. di Casali stated that he spoke several languages and was well acquainted with the frauds practised on board Italian vessels in the harbor of New York. He was married to an American lady from Delaware. Enclosing letters of recommendation from several distinguished Americans and several editorial notices of his own paper, Mr. di Casali reminded the President that, if the appointment was granted, he would be the only Italian to hold office.

warned his chief that its editor was not worthy of much confidence.⁴⁴

The advertisements and public notices inserted in the newspapers of the city for the first half of the nineteenth century give a fairly accurate clue to the trades and professions in which Italians were engaged during this period.

In medicine Dr. Agostino Cortilli earned distinction for his treatment of gout. In grateful acknowledgment, an unidentified patient revealed through the public press that Dr. Cortilli, after "a particular and deliberate enquiry" into the nature of the malady, undertook its cure, which he effectually performed in the short space of sixteen days, restoring the patient "to the enjoyment of the most perfect health."⁴⁵

Among the artists who enjoyed popularity was Joseph Sera, who had been the architect and scene painter for the Bowery Theatre. Sera further opened a school for drawing and painting in all their branches, to which a limited number of students were admitted.⁴⁶ Another artist, Ottaviano Gori, a Florentine, drew public attention through his use of *scogliola*—a composition which presented a beautiful imitation of marble—in the columns he had erected in one of the apartments of the third story of the Merchants Exchange, the first time that this composition was introduced to America. The press announcement recalled that the pilastres and columns of some of the churches and palaces of Italy were done in this manner in imitation of various kinds of marble. The imitation was exact with respect to color and possessed a polish of the greatest brilliancy.⁴⁷

A well-known manufacturer of busts and ornaments in plaster was B. Ceragioli and Company, whose place of business was at 125 William Street. In an advertisement announcing that they had made large additions to their

⁴⁴ MS State Archives, Turin.

⁴⁵ New York *Evening Post*, Feb. 2, 1814.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, Jan. 8, 1829.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, Aug. 23, 1839.

assortment of figures and ornaments, they stated that they had recently received from Paris eight busts copied from originals by Canova, besides about forty others of different descriptions.⁴⁸

Well-known dealers in Italian art objects were Porri, Rinaldi and Company of 113 Broadway who had a wide collection of prints and paintings received from London.⁴⁹ To their offerings this firm later added an assortment of looking glass plates and elegant collections of colored and plain prints by the first artists.⁵⁰ Four years later they also advertised the sale of surveying compasses, thermometers, Reeve's water colors, and the like.⁵¹ In 1834 an exhibit was held at the Academy of Fine Arts showing Panini's grand paintings representing the exterior and interior of St. Peter's at Rome, together with other interesting monuments both ancient and modern of the Eternal City.⁵² An auction sale of the superb collection of oil paintings comprising the famous Sanguinetti's Gallery was held in New York City in 1838 by A. Levy, auctioneer. The sale which was peremptory, took place on October 9, 1838, at the Academy of Fine Arts in Barclay Street.⁵³

Musical instruments were sold by D. Mazzinghi at No. 11 Murray Street. As early as 1804 this Italian advertised the receipt from Europe of an assortment of elegant patent pianofortes with additional keys by the well-known makers, Astor, Ball, and Clementi.⁵⁴ The following year Mr. Mazzinghi moved his business to No. 29 Maiden Lane, where besides Clementi's grand upright, horizontal, and square pianofortes, he sold large chamber barrel organs and superb engravings in elegant frames.⁵⁵

D. Clavenzani advertised himself as a varnisher and

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, April 7, May 20, 1829.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, May 19, 1806.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, Nov. 13, 1810.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, Feb. 5, 1814.

⁵² *Ibid.*, June 26, 1834.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, Oct. 9, 1838.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, Oct. 3, 1804.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, Dec. 15, 1805.

ornamental worker on glass. His place of business was located at No. 196 Broadway, where, among other things, he framed prints, drawings, and needle works "in the richest manner," to any pattern. He also sold looking glasses ornamented in gold and silver in the most fashionable style.⁵⁶

Telescopes, opera glasses, spectacles, mathematical instruments, watches, jewelry, cutlery, tea trays, snuff boxes, and similar objects were sold by Peter Bello, whose establishment was located at No. 259 Broadway. Besides selling barometers, thermometers and repaired watches, Mr. Bello blew glasses for chemical and philosophical experiments.⁵⁷

An original variety store located at No. 279 Broadway was owned and kept by Giuseppe Bonfanti, who apparently was most popular. So well supplied was he with everything in the fancy lines that an enthusiastic New Yorker won a bet of ten dollars when he was able to prove to a Southerner from Charleston that there was not an article that he could mention that "our Joe Bonfanti" did not keep. The New Yorker won the bet because the Italian even was able to produce a second-hand pulpit. Bonfanti's splendid stock made him a great favorite with the fashionable dames of New York. Even poetry was bought and sold by this shrewd merchant.⁵⁸

Bonfanti was also engaged in the jewelry trade, including such articles as watches, combs, and various kinds of curios and rare objects. In the spring of 1832 he informed the public that "important and indispensable business would soon call him to Italy for an indefinite period."⁵⁹ It is not known whether Mr. Bonfanti actually visited his native country. In the fall of 1838, however, he met with a fatal accident, having been found on the pave-

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, May 14, 1805.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, July 9, 1817.

⁵⁸ [Joseph A. Scoville] Walter Barrett, *pseud.*, *The old Merchants of New York City*, (New York, 1864), I, 108.

⁵⁹ *New York Evening Post*, March 29, 1832.

ment of Read Street so badly bruised that he died shortly afterwards. The notice of the accident stated that Mr. Bonfanti was fifty years of age and owned an estate in Italy that was valued at \$50,000.⁶⁰

At her Corset Ware House located at No. 24, Rivington Street, a few doors from the Bowery, a Mrs. Cantelo had for sale a choice assortment of corsets.⁶¹ An extensive assortment of all kinds of Leghorn hats, cut straw and braids, black Italian lustring, Italian satins and velvets was sold by A. Caselli at No. 54 Exchange Place.⁶² A so-called Menotti's water-proof composition for rendering felts and all sorts of woollens, linens, cottons, and silks waterproof without altering their color, suppleness and lustre, was advertised for sale in the *New York Evening Post*.⁶³

The sale of newly invented harmless perfuming candles which, yielding a sweet perfume purified the air from bad smells in the rooms where people assembled in the winter, was announced by Charles Del Vecchio at No. 138 Broadway and by Mr. J. Lanetti at No. 150 Chatham Square. The advertisement further stated that their "ashes" clean and preserve the teeth.⁶⁴ We do not know whether the success or failure of his business had anything to do with the appointment twenty-five years later, of Charles Del Vecchio as one of the three fire commissioners of the city.⁶⁵

In 1839 the columns of the *New York Morning Herald*⁶⁶ published an unusual advertisement. Wanted were several French or Italian counts, many of whom, it said, used to perambulate Broadway in the hope of marrying fortunes. If they had been unsuccessful and were willing to go as apprentices to the hair-dressing business, they were advised, especially if they were the "terrier breed" type, to consult "my barber," Count Condottieri, a young Sicilian exile,

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, Sept. 27, 1838.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, Oct. 21, 1822.

⁶² *Ibid.*, Feb. 1, 1838.

⁶³ Aug. 9, 1842.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, Jan. 17, 1815.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, Dec. 14, 1839.

⁶⁶ Sept. 30, 1839.

at No. 3 Beekman Street, who had several newly stuffed shaving chairs, and who wielded a razor and dressed hair equal to any man in New York.

There were several Italians who were engaged in the teaching of their native language and literature either in colleges and universities or as private teachers. Since this subject formed a separate study^{66a}, it may be sufficient for the purpose of this article to record the names of the most important and successful teachers. Lorenzo Da Ponte taught at Columbia College from 1825 to his death in 1838, being succeeded by E. Felix Foresti who held the professorship from 1839 to 1856. Professor Foresti also taught at New York University from 1842 to 1856. A son of Da Ponte, Lorenzo L. Da Ponte, had previously (1832-1840) been engaged in teaching Italian at New York University. But the Italian language was taught privately in New York long before it received academic recognition. According to Da Ponte's own *Storia della lingua e letteratura italiana in New York*,⁶⁷ the city was infatuated with the language and literature of Italy. He mentions that instruction in Italian was given by Aloisi, Padovani, Mezzara, and Antonio and Charles Rapallo. Except for Charles Rapallo, who, as is known, became Judge of the Court of Appeals, nothing is recorded of these early teachers of Italian.⁶⁸

Italians were popular as teachers of vocal music. In August, 1833, signora Emilia Saccomani, member of the Italian operatic company, announced through the public press that having permanently established her residence in New York City, she offered her services as teacher of vocal music "according to the latest and most approved rules of the Italian school." Her ability as a teacher both in Milan and Bologna led her to hope that an opportunity

^{66a} H. R. Marraro, Pioneer Italian teachers of Italian in the United States. *Modern Language Journal*, XXVIII, (Nov. 1944), 555-582.

⁶⁷ New York, Gray e Bunce, Stampatori, 1827.

⁶⁸ Bruno Roselli, *Italian Yesterday and Today*, (Boston, 1935), 13, 80.

would be afforded her to establish her claims to the patronage of the public in New York.⁶⁹ At about the same time, signor A. Berti, who had lately returned from Europe, after an absence of two years, announced that he was prepared to give lessons on the piano, guitar, and "singing in the best Italian style."⁷⁰ A signor Repetti offered to give instruction in music on the violin, the piano, and other instruments. The wonderful skill of this artist, and his mastery of the highest graces of musical execution, the announcement stated, made his assistance extremely desirable to those who, having already had "respectable" proficiency in the art, wished to acquire "a finished manner and the niceties of expression."⁷¹

The achievement of Italians in music, and particularly in the opera which they finally established in New York, will be studied separately. For the present it is sufficient to refer the student to professor G. Odell's *Annals of the New York Stage*⁷² which contains a wealth of information on Italian music and theatrical productions and actors during this period. The following notes on Italian actors and performances are not included in this gigantic work, and for that reason worthy of record here.

In the summer of 1839 Mr. and Mrs. Toglioni showed the audiences of the Park Theatre what the true classical style of dancing really was. On July 1, of that year, on the occasion of a benefit performance, a most beautiful and unique ballet was given for the first time on this side of the Atlantic. Since rumors had spread that these artists had not met with a reception commensurate to their very high merits, the *New York Morning Herald*⁷³ offered the

⁶⁹ *New York Evening Post*, Aug. 9, 1833.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, Sept. 10, 1833.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, Oct. 20, 1842.

⁷² George C. D. Odell, *Annals of the New York Stage*. (New York.) Volumes 2 to 5 (1927 to 1931) inclusive deal with the first half of the nineteenth century.

⁷³ July 1, 1839.

explanation that it had been due to the fact that these artists had appeared in New York at the close of the season. Lest the artists should imagine that New Yorkers could not appreciate the highest efforts of genius, the newspaper urged that it was just and proper that they should give them an overwhelming house. The ballet "La Sylphède" was performed for four nights only in the month of August.⁷⁴ When they took their farewell leave on the evening of September, 1839, the Toglioni were described as "the most graceful and accomplished dancers" that had ever appeared in this country. Hope was expressed that the Emperor of Russia and the King of Prussia would permit them to return the following season.⁷⁵

In the summer of 1841 Madame Romanini made her second appearance on the slack wire at the Park Theatre. Her performances were judged truly so "extraordinary" as to excite the admiration of all those who witnessed her on the night of her debut.⁷⁶

An entirely new pantomime prepared under the immediate direction of Signor Bologna, called "Harlequin's Statue" or "The Witches of the Lakes" was presented in New York, in 1804,⁷⁷ Bologna playing the part of the clown. The following month another pantomime entitled "Harlequin Doctor" or "The Apprentice Magician" was presented by Bologna. In this was introduced the "celebrated" Fricassée Dance by Bologna and Martin, with other pantomime tricks and drolleries.⁷⁸

A fancy dress ball, under the auspices of Mr. Lanna, was held in March 1833 at the North American Hotel, Bowery. The tickets, advertised at \$1.00 each, admitted one gentleman and two ladies.⁷⁹

⁷⁴ New York *Evening Post*, Aug. 23, 1839.

⁷⁵ New York *Morning Herald*, Sept. 24, 1839.

⁷⁶ New York *Evening Post*, Sept. 2, 1841.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, April 28, 1804.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, May 14, 1804.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, March 12, 1833.

In conclusion it may be stated that though the Italian community in New York during the first half of the nineteenth century continued to be small in number, yet it comprised many hard-working, industrious, honest, and law-abiding citizens who played a distinguished rôle in the cultural and material progress of the country. Their greatest achievements were perhaps in music and the fine arts. Noteworthy is the fact that Italian journalism in America, which later had such widespread influence, was started during this period in New York, and that the Italian Benevolent Association which, too, was founded during this period was the first of the several hundred similar societies that are now to be found everywhere in Italo-American communities of the United States.

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